

Outlook: Hot and Dry

Water conservation is everyone's responsibility

08:27 AM CDT on Tuesday, June 13, 2006

You do your part. And then you keep doing it.

That's what brings communities together – and keeps them together. You can see the discipline at work in the impressive chart accompanying this editorial.

Frisco. McKinney. Dallas. Irving. Arlington. Many North Texans are abiding by water restrictions that weren't too common a few years ago. In McKinney alone, usage went down by about 12 million gallons the day the city banned outdoor watering in the heat of the day and restricted sprinklers and irrigation systems to weekly use.

But North Texas can't curb its water consumption if everyone doesn't pitch in. Communities like Flower Mound, the Park Cities and Duncanville still haven't adopted water restrictions despite the early heat and long stint without serious rain.

We won't tell them to eat their peas and get with the program. Instead, let's hope they drive around one of the local lakes and see for themselves. Lake Lavon, for example, is 10 feet below where it needs to be. It looks like a water cooler after a group of teenagers have hit it hard during two-a-day practices. Gulp. Gulp. Gulp.

Lavon isn't the only sufferer because the region is in a moderate drought, according to the National Drought Mitigation Center run by the University of Nebraska. Given that this is June and North Texas usually doesn't get much more rain until October, the situation isn't likely to change soon. Monsoon Central, we're not.

So, all the more reason for everyone to do his or her part, regardless of whether water limitations exist.

Self-protection works as a motivator, too. The water supplies for Dallas and other parts of North Texas depend upon building new lakes – in other people's back yards. Not surprisingly, many of our neighbors don't like that.

There's a tempest brewing now in East Texas along the Neches River. Residents want a wildlife refuge where this region's water planners want to locate the Fastrill Reservoir. They complain North Texans don't do enough to conserve water, so why should they give up their land to help us?

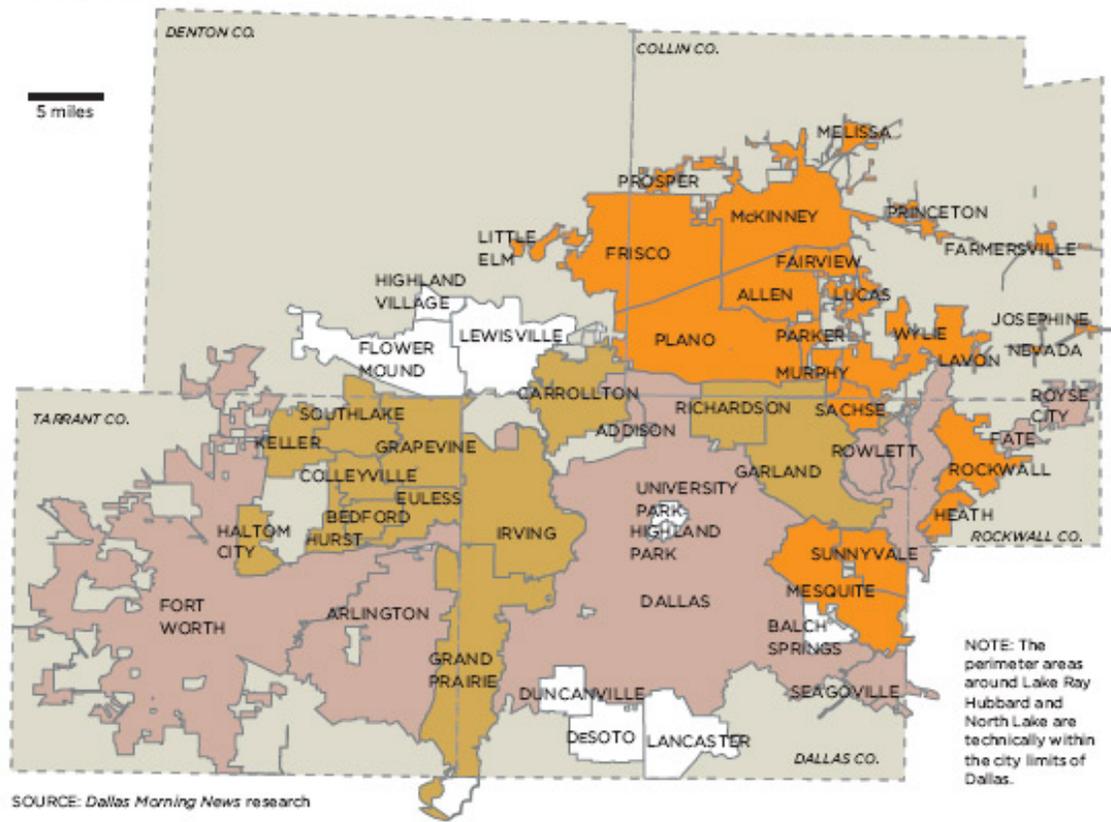
The more this region can do to conserve water, the more it can show its neighbors we're trying.

That's bound to help when it comes time to persuade others we need those new lakes as well as conservation.

AREA WATER RESTRICTIONS

Water restrictions and rules vary by city. City Web sites are a good source for specific rules. The following map gives a general view of the Dallas-Fort Worth area's water guidelines. Categories are assigned based on current rules or those expected soon. Many cities at all levels are imposing fines or fees for violations.

- **Most restrictive:** Generally allows watering landscaping once a week and restricts watering during the day from late morning to early evening.
- **Moderate:** Generally allows watering two times a week and bans watering during the day. Some have only voluntary guidelines.
- **Light restrictions:** Watering allowed any day of the week. Residents asked not to water during the day.
- **No restrictions**



TOM SETZER/Staff Artist